2006

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

BULL TROUT SPORT FISHERY REESTABLISHMENT in Hungry Horse Reservoir and South Fork Flathead River Drainage

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501

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DRAFT

MEPA/NEPA/HB495 GENERIC CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action: MFWP proposes to modify fishing regulations, beginning in 2002, to reestablish a bull trout sport fishery in Hungry Horse Reservoir (HHR), Big Salmon Lake, and the South Fork Flathead River (SFFR) upstream of Hungry Horse Dam.

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MFWP and the FWP Commission have authority over the fishing regulation change. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has authority to modify the 4(d) rule within the Endangered Species Act to allow for sport fishing of bull trout.

3. Name of Project: Bull Trout Sport Fishery Reestablishment in Hungry Horse Reservoir and the South Fork Flathead River Drainage.

4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency): Fisheries Biologist Scott Rumsey (406) 751-4548
   MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
   490 North Meridian Road
   Kalispell, MT 59901

5. If Applicable:

   Estimated Construction/Commencement Date:

   Estimated Completion Date: This environmental assessment must be completed by October 2000, upon a favorable record of decision. It must then be submitted to the USFWS for a section 4(d) rule amendment under the Endangered Species Act. Section 4(d) of the Act provides authority for the Service to promulgate special rules for threatened species that would relax the prohibition against taking. A favorable ruling by the USFWS by July 2001 advances the proposal to the MFWP fishing regulations process beginning in summer 2001. A subsequent, favorable FWP Commission ruling would implement the regulation change March 1, 2002.

   Current Status of Project Design (% complete):

6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township): Hungry Horse Reservoir and the South Fork Flathead River drainage fall within Flathead and Powell counties in northwest Montana. This area extends from T20N to T30N, R12W to R19W.

7. Project Size: The proposal involves HHR and the South Fork Flathead River drainage upstream of Hungry Horse Dam. All lands fall under ownership of the Flathead National Forest, U.S.Forest Service. Lands south of the Meadow Creek trailhead are within the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

   At full pool elevation, HHR contains approximately 23,800 surface acres and is nearly 35 miles in length. The SFFR extends upstream from the reservoir in a southerly direction approximately 60 miles to its origin - the confluence of Youngs and Danaher creeks. The drainage area encompasses nearly 1,700 square miles.

8. Map/site Plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map, showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

   Map attached.

9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project Including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action: The proposed action by MFWP is to modify fishing regulations to reestablish a limited bull trout sport fishery in HHR, SFFR , and Big Salmon Lake beginning in March 2002. In HHR, the proposed daily and possession limit for bull trout is 1 fish. Upon catching a bull trout, an angler must either kill it at once and count it as the limit, or release it. It would be unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason. In the SFFR, from HHR upstream to the confluence of Youngs and Danaher creeks, and in Big Salmon Lake, the proposed action would allow catch and release for bull trout. Existing regulations for cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and grayling in the drainage from Hungry Horse Dam and all waters upstream would remain the same.

   Benefits and Purpose:

   The South Fork fishery is managed under the FWP "Fisheries Management Plan for the South Fork Flathead River Drainage" (1991)(Appendix A – available on request). The management of native westslope cutthroat and bull trout is under the "South Fork Flathead River Conservation Agreement" (1997)(Appendix B – available on request) signed by FWP, CSKT, USFS, BPA, BOR, and USFWS. Goal 3(c) of this document is to provide a fishable population of bull trout in the South Fork drainage and to define criteria under which a South Fork bull trout fishery can be reestablished (Part II, 5(b).

   Hydropower mitigation efforts to benefit bull trout are conducted under the Hungry Horse Fisheries Mitigation Implementation Plan (1993)(Appendix C – available on request) under the Northwest Power Planning Act and funded by the Bonneville Power Administration.

The SFFR bull trout population represents a geograpically distinct restoration /conservation area as defined by the Montana Bull Trout Restoration Team. Based on monitoring and population status data, the population is stable and increasing, and meets the goals and objectives of a restored or recovered population. One of the goals and the direct benefit of a restored bull trout population is recreational utilization by the public. The purpose is to provide recreational angling opportunities for a unique Montana native fish as outlined in the proposed action (Part 1, line 9).

10. Listing of any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has authority over the Endangered Species Act. Section 4 (d) of the Act provides authority for the Service to promulgate special rules for threatened species that would relax the prohibition against taking.

11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
Bonneville Power Administration
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Forest Service

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A. Evaluation of the Impacts of the Proposed Action Including Secondary and Cumulative Impacts on the Physical and Human Environment:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality?		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature patterns, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

3. WATER **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity or pathogens?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in the risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Violation of the Montana Non Degradation Statute?		X				
j. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
k. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
l. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
m. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comme Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plant species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (Continued)

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		x				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X		Yes	5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of non-game species?		x				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		x				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		x				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?	x					5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			x			5g
h. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish/Wildlife Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

5.b. Comment. changes may occur in the diversity or abundance of bull trout within the South Fork above Hungry Horse Dam. The following criteria established by the South Fork Conservation Agreement will be adhered to:

1). Bull trout catch per net in HHR fall gill nets remains above 70% of the long- term average.
2). Bull trout redd counts in HHR and SFFR monitoring tributaries remains above 70% of the long-term average.

The fishery will be closed if either of these values fall below 70% of the long-term average for two consecutive years. If the fishery is closed because it fails to meet these criteria, it will not be reopened until both criteria are met for two successive years. If illegally introduced species appear in the HHR fish assemblage, or if Hungry Horse Reservoir drawdown exceeds 85 feet for two consecutive years, the harvest regulation will be reviewed.

5.f. Refer to 5.b.

5.g. HHR and the South Fork Flathead River drainage are presently open for angling and harvest of other species, but closed to intentional fishing for bull trout. Both incidental and intentional catch of bull trout is presently occurring. Information from the adjacent Swan drainage fishery monitoring indicates a stable and increasing bull trout population with a harvest restriction of one bull trout per day from Swan Lake. Similar population trends for bull trout (stable and increasing) in HHR, SFFR, and Big Salmon Lake warrant a fishery. Therefore, this proposal mimics the Swan Lake regulation for HHR and also opens the river and Big Salmon Lake to catch and release fishing. Due to access limitations and the availability of monitoring data, MFWP feels that catch and release fishing is reasonable.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Noise/Electrical Effects (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other: ___						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:			X			10a
b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed)

10a. Increased fishing pressure will result in increased use of the waters and associated accesses. We do not know if fishing pressure will increase significantly. If it did, there may be a need for increased FWP enforcement in the area.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)			X			11c
d. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

11.c. Reestablishment of a recreational fishery for bull trout in HHR, SFFR, and Big Salmon Lake will increase angler opportunity for a unique native fish. Increased angler opportunity will potentially deter illegal fish introductions. Reestablishment of recreational fishing will build public support for native fish management programs. Furthermore, it will demonstrate the success of ESA in preserving species that may once again be valued for public utility.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Inde
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural or historic values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE **Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:**	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)			X			13a
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				13b
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				13c
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				13d
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				13e
f. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Summary Evaluation of Significance (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13a. Increased fishing pressure will result in increased use of the waters and associated accesses. Based on Swan Creek results, it is not likely that fishing pressure will increase significantly under the proposed regulation. Since the populations are considered stable or increasing and recovered, angling harvest should not affect bull trout recovery as a whole.

3b. Some will view angling as a potential risk; however, previous experience on HHR and Swan Lake indicates anglers will be conservative in their harvest. 1995 creel data from Swan Lake indicates bull trout anglers released an average of 86 percent of their catch annually.

13c. Recreational angling and harvest is allowable under Rule 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act, given proof the population is secure and angling does not pose an unacceptable risk.

13d. This proposal is based on a bull trout population that is considered recovered based on long-term monitoring showing the population is stable and increasing. Proposed angling regulations are conservative, and future angling opportunity is based on population monitoring criteria.

13e. This proposal is expected to generate both considerable debate and support due to listing under ESA.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (Continued)

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action, whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider, and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Implementation of any alternative will incorporate the guidelines developed in the South Fork Flathead River Conservation Agreement (copy enclosed).

Alternative 1). No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would maintain the angling status quo where HHR and the SFFR will remain closed to the taking and/or intentional fishing for bull trout. Angler opportunity will not be increased, and a fishery for bull trout will continue to not be allowed in spite of a stable and increasing population trend.

Alternative 2). Incorporate the proposed action.

The proposed action by MFWP is to modify fishing regulations to reestablish a limited bull trout sport fishery in HHR, SFFR, and Big Salmon Lake beginning in March 2002. In HHR, the proposed daily and possession limit for bull trout is 1 fish. Upon catching a bull trout, an angler must either kill it at once and count it as the limit, or release it. It is unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason. In the SFFR from HHR upstream to the confluence of Youngs and Danaher creeks and in Big Salmon Lake, the proposed action would allow catch and release for bull trout. Existing regulations for cutthroat trout, rainbow trout and grayling from Hungry Horse Dam and all waters upstream would remain the same.

Incorporating the proposed action will moderately increase angler opportunity and a fishery for bull trout will be reestablished. Up until 1993 a fishery for bull trout existed in HHR, the SFFR, and other waters within the SFFR drainage where one bull trout could be kept daily. Upon catching a bull trout, anglers had to kill it at once and count it as their limit, or release it. In 1994 all waters of the Western District, except Swan Lake and HHR, were closed to the taking of bull trout. In these two waters, one bull trout was allowed daily or in possession. Immediate kill or release was also required. In 1995 HHR was also closed to the taking of bull trout, and Swan Lake remained open to one bull trout daily. Rationale for closing HHR was excess drawdown (greater than 85 feet) in HHR for repeated years that would potentially jeopardize the reservoir bull trout population.

The proposed action will be contingent upon the following criteria:

1). Bull trout catch per net in HHR fall gill nets remains above 70% of the long-term average.
2). Bull trout redd counts in HHR and SFFR monitoring tributaries remains above 70% of the long-term average.

The fishery will be closed if either of these values fall below 70% of the long-term average for two consecutive years. If the fishery is closed because it fails to meet these criteria, it will not be re-opened until both criteria are met for two successive years. If illegally introduced species appear in the HHR fish assemblage, or if Hungry Horse Reservoir drawdown exceeds 85 feet for two consecutive years, the harvest regulation will be reviewed.

Monitoring data pertinent to the above criteria is enclosed (Tables 1-4, Figures 1 and 2).

Alternative 3). Modify alternative 2 (proposed action).

A modification of alternative 2 will affect angler opportunity and possibly the harvest and mortality on bull trout. A logical upward progression for bull trout angling opportunity and mortality in HHR and the SFFR based on fish vulnerability would be the following:

1. All waters closed to the taking and/or intentional fishing for bull trout (present regulation).
2. Catch and release fishing for bull trout in HHR only; SFFR closed to the taking and/or intentional fishing for bull trout.
3. Catch and release fishing for bull trout in HHR , SFFR, and Big Salmon Lake.
4. Open HHR to 1 bull trout daily; catch and release in SFFR and Big Salmon Lake (proposed action).
5. Open HHR and Big Salmon Lake to 1 bull trout daily; catch and release in South Fork.
6. Open HHR, Big Salmon Lake, and SFFR to 1 bull trout daily.

Criteria developed under alternative 2 will also be applied to alternative 3.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency: Enforcement of fishing regulations by MFWP enforcement personnel.

3. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES / NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: N/A

4. Describe the level of public involvement for this project, if any; and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances: This project, in its entirety, has been discussed publicly on radio broadcasts and in interagency professional meetings. Public comment will be solicited via newspaper releases and distribution of the draft EA to interested parties in the area. An open house will be conducted at FWP in Kalispell on October 5, 2000, from 7 – 9 p.m.

6. Duration of comment period if any: 30 days, September 19 – October 19, 2000.

7. Name, title, address, and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Fisheries Biologist Scott Rumsey/Jim Vashro, Fisheries Manager
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 N Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 751-4548

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

5.b. Comment. changes may occur in the diversity or abundance of bull trout within the South Fork above Hungry Horse Dam. The following criteria established by the South Fork Conservation Agreement will be adhered to:

1) Bull trout catch per net in HHR fall gill nets remains above 70% of the long- term average.
2) Bull trout redd counts in HHR and SFFR monitoring tributaries remains above 70% of the long-term average.

The fishery will be closed if either of these values fall below 70% of the long-term average for two consecutive years. If the fishery is closed because it fails to meet these criteria, it will not be reopened until both criteria are met for two successive years. If illegally introduced species appear in the HHR fish assemblage, or if Hungry Horse Reservoir drawdown exceeds 85 feet for two consecutive years, the harvest regulation will be reviewed.

5.f. Refer to 5.b.

5.g. HHR and the South Fork Flathead River drainage are presently open for angling and harvest of other species, but closed to intentional fishing for bull trout. Both incidental and intentional catch of bull trout is presently occurring. Information from the adjacent Swan drainage fishery monitoring indicates a stable and increasing bull trout population with a harvest restriction of one bull trout per day from Swan Lake. Similar population trends for bull trout (stable and increasing) in HHR, SFFR, and Big Salmon Lake warrant a fishery. Therefore, this proposal mimics the Swan Lake regulation for HHR and also opens the river and Big Salmon Lake to catch and release fishing. Due to access limitations and the availability of monitoring data, MFWP feels that catch and release fishing is reasonable.

10a. Increased fishing pressure will result in increased use of the waters and associated accesses. We do not know if fishing pressure will increase significantly. If it did, there may be a need for increased FWP enforcement in the area.

11.c. Reestablishment of a recreational fishery for bull trout in HHR, SFFR, and Big Salmon Lake will increase angler opportunity for a unique native fish. Increased angler opportunity will potentially deter illegal fish introductions. Reestablishment of recreational fishing will build public support for native fish management programs. Furthermore, it will demonstrate the success of ESA in preserving species that may once again be valued for public utility.

13a. Increased fishing pressure will result in increased use of the waters and associated accesses. Based on Swan Creek results, it is not likely that fishing pressure will increase significantly under the proposed regulation. Since the populations are considered stable or increasing and recovered, angling harvest should not affect bull trout recovery as a whole.

13b. Some will view angling as a potential risk; however, previous experience on HHR and Swan Lake indicates anglers will be conservative in their harvest. 1995 creel data from Swan Lake indicates bull trout anglers released an average of 86 percent of their catch annually.

13c. Recreational angling and harvest is allowable under Rule 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act, given proof the population is secure and angling does not pose an unacceptable risk.

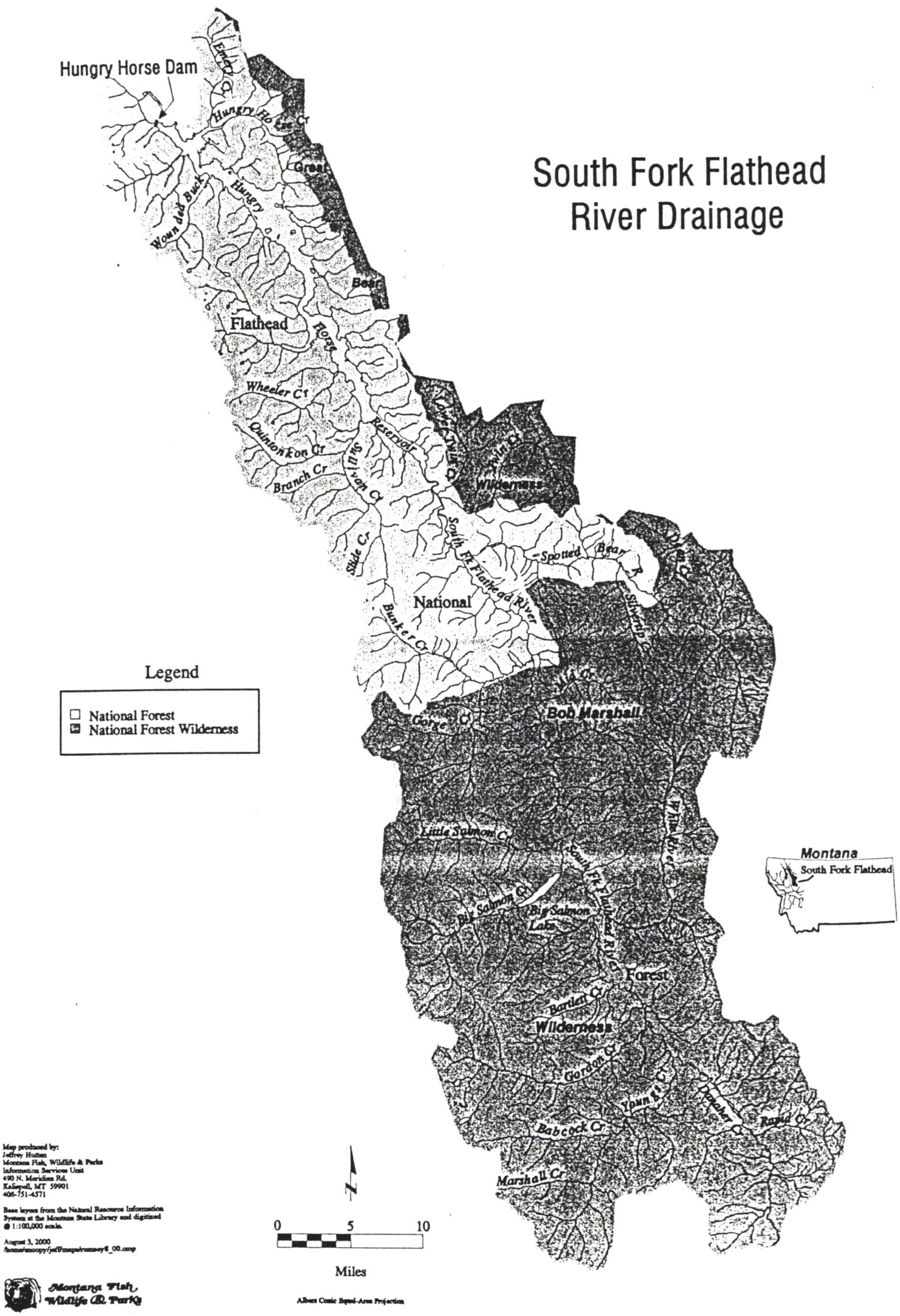
13d. This proposal is based on a bull trout population that is considered recovered based on long-term monitoring showing the population is stable and increasing. Proposed angling regulations are conservative, and future angling opportunity is based on population monitoring criteria.

13e. This proposal is expected to generate both considerable debate and support due to listing under ESA.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Select Alternative 2, allowing the harvest of one bull trout daily in Hungry Horse Reservoir and catch and release fishing for bull trout in the mainstem South Fork Flathead River downstream from the confluence of Youngs and Danaher creeks and in Big Salmon Lake. These fisheries have sufficient monitoring data to show they are stable and recovered bull trout populations with no imminent risks. All these fisheries have supported sport fishing in the past with no observed impacts. There are criteria in place to close angling if the fishing declines.

LIST OF MAPS, TABLES, & FIGURES



South Fork Flathead
River Drainage
Hungry Horse Dam
Emery Cr
Hungry Horse Cr
Great
Bear
Wounded Buck
Hungry
Horse
Flathead
Wheeler Cr
Quintonkon Cr
Branch Cr
Sullivan Cr
Reservoir
Slide Cr
South Fk Flathead River
Spotted Bear R
Wilderness
National
Bunker Cr
Gorge Cr
Bob Marshall
Little Salmon Cr
Big Salmon Cr
Big Salmon Lake
White River
Forest
Bartlett Cr
Wilderness
Gordon Cr
Babcock Cr
Danaher Cr
Rapid Cr
Marshall Cr
Legend
National Forest
National Forest Wilderness
Montana
South Fork Flathead
Map produced by:
Jeffrey Hutten
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Information Services Unit
490 N. Meridian Rd.
Kalispell, MT 59901
406-751-4571
Base layers from the Natural Resource Information System at the Montana State Library and digitized @ 1:100,000 scale.
August 3, 2000
0
5
10
Miles
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Albers Conic Equal-Area Projection

Table 1. Summary of South Fork Flathead bull trout redd counts from index stream sections (1993-1999).

Reservoir Tributaries

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Wounded Buck	22	29	34	41	14	5	3
Wheeler	12	10	1	3	1	4	12
Sullivan	25	8	--	52	50	54	55
Quintonkin	5	3	7	4	0	11	15
Totals	64	50	42	100	65	74	85

Upper River Tributaries

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Youngs	40	24	34	74	43	--	85
Gordon	35	44	46	58	30	--	99
White River	39	60	45	86	31	--	76
Little Salmon	56	47	43	134	100	--	138
Totals	170	175	168	353	204	--	398

Big Salmon Lake Tributary (Disjunct Population)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Big Salmon	92	91	93	61	55	--	59

Table 2. Mean numbers of bull trout redds observed and the percent difference between the 1999 count and the means from index stream sections in the South Fork Flathead River drainage.

Reservoir Tributaries

Stream	6 yr. $\bar{x}$ (1993-1998)	Range	1999	% Difference
Wounded Buck[1/]	24.2	5-41	3	↓ 87.6
Wheeler	5.2	1-12	12	↑ 130.8
Sullivan[2/]	37.8	8-54	55	↑ 45.5
Quintonkin[2/]	5.0	0-11	15	↑ 200.0
Total Reservoir Tributaries	66.0	42-100	85	↑ 29.0

Upper River Tributaries

Stream	5 yr. $\bar{x}$ (1993-1997)	Range	1999	% Difference
Youngs[2/]	43.0	24-74	85	↑ 97.7
Gordon[2/]	42.6	30-58	99	↑ 132.4
White River	52.2	31-86	76	↑ 45.6
Little Salmon	76.0	43-134	138	↑ 81.6
Total Reservoir Tributaries	214.0	168-353	398	↑ 86.0

Big Salmon Lake Tributary (Disjunct Population)

Stream	5 yr. $\bar{x}$ (1993-1997)	Range	1999	% Difference
Big Salmon	78.0	55-93	59	↓ 24.7

Combined Reservoir and Upper River Tributaries (1993-1997) (Big Salmon not included)

6 yr. $\bar{x}$ (1993-1998)	Range	1999	% Difference
302.0	210-453	483	↑ 60.0

Table 3. Fall sinking gill net summary of bull trout catch in Hungry Horse Reservoir (number of bull trout per net) 1958-1998.

Year		Bull Trout
1958		6.9
1961		4.6
1966		2.2
1968		2.3
1970		6.1
1972		4.6
1974		5.2
1976		3.7
1978		2.8
1980		4.3
1983		1.9
1984		4.6
1985		3.3
1986		4.9
1988		7
1989		5.4
1990		5.5
1991		4.2
1992	*	6.5
1993		5.4
1994		7.3
1995		6.9
1996		7.2
1997		7
1998		7.6
Mean		5.09

* Sullivan area not set

Table 4. Hungry Horse Reservoir annual maximum drawdown (1955-1998).

Date	Feet	Date	Feet
1955	-65	1977	-64
1956	-83	1978	-102
1957	-85	1979	-60
1958	-68	1980	-69
1959	-78	1981	-41
1960	-43	1982	-79
1961	-59	1983	-45
1962	-61	1984	-68
1963	-42	1985	-85
1964	-72	1986	-57
1965	-107	1987	-55
1966	-60	1988	-178
1967	-119	1989	-138
1968	-69	1990	-66
1969	-69	1991	-99
1970	-87	1992	-79
1971	-97	1993	-188
1972	-128	1994	-174
1973	-73	1995	-95
1974	-111	1996	-86
1975	-94	1997	-130
1976	-69	1998	-55

Figure 1. Fall sinking gill net summary of bull trout catch in Hungry Horse Reservoir (number of bull trout per net) 1958-1998.

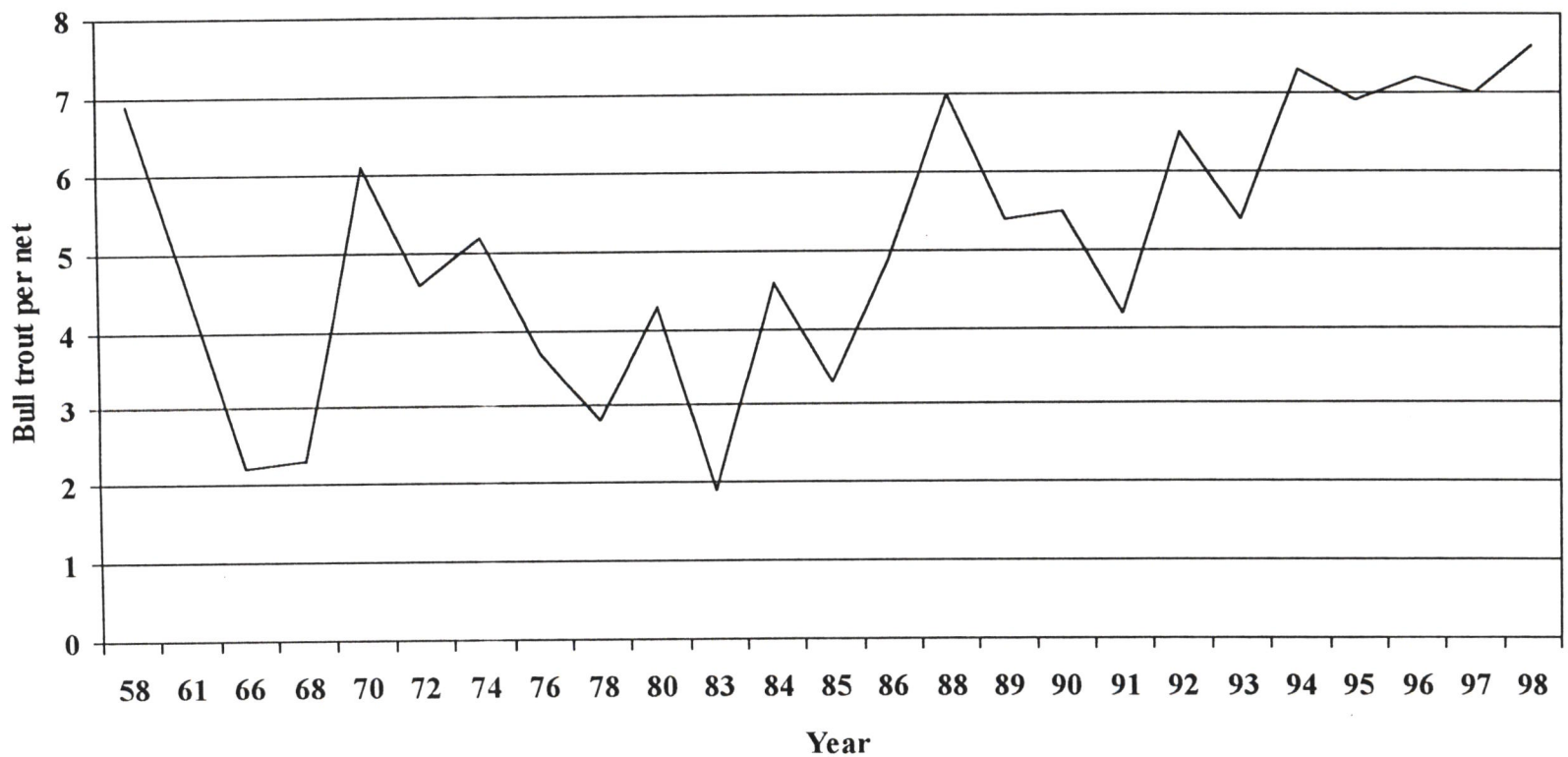
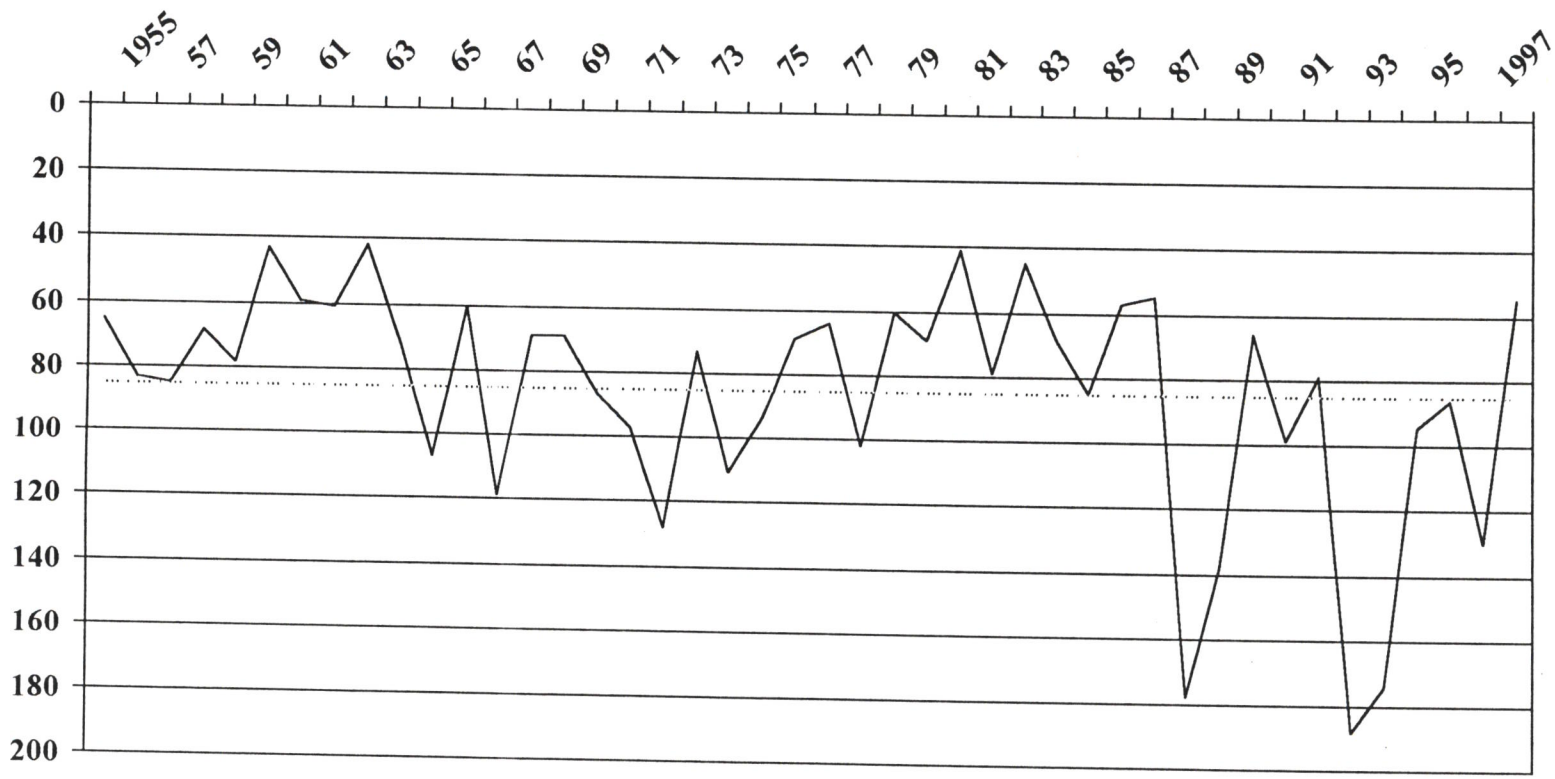


Figure 2. Hungry Horse Reservoir annual maximum drawdown (1955-1998).



LIST OF APPENDICES

A. Fisheries Management Plan for the South Fork Flathead River Drainage

B. South Fork Flathead River Conservation Agreement

C. Hungry Horse Dam Fisheries Mitigation Implementation Plan

Available from:

MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501